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The heritage of young  
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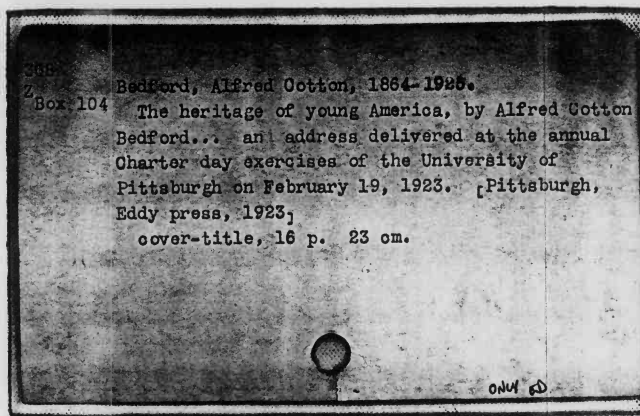
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Through the President's Office

# THE HERITAGE OF YOUNG AMERICA

By

Alfred Cotton Bedford

LL. D. ('22)

*Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Standard  
Oil Company (N. J.)*

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Box 104



AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL  
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## THE HERITAGE OF YOUNG AMERICA

By ALFRED COTTON BEDFORD

I COUNT it no small privilege to be called upon to address the students of the University of Pittsburgh, with which I am now proud to claim kinship. It renews one's youth to meet with youth. It gives a veteran like myself fresh zest in life to see you young men and women, full of ambition, full of enthusiasm, full of the joy of living, about to launch out on the great adventure. To be young and to be in America—truly you are twice blessed.

### EDUCATION IS AN INVESTMENT

Your years in this University represent a great investment. You have invested in your training the most precious part of your capital, three or four or five years of your life in its most formative part. The community and individual donors have invested great sums in the provision of ample facilities for your earlier training, and in the splendid equipment of the University. Your parents, perhaps you yourselves, have invested no small sum, often representing hard sacrifice, to maintain you during these years. Given this great investment, of money and of what is more precious than money, time and hopes and cherished ambitions, should you not at times pause and take stock, ask whether this investment is yielding the dividends in character and capacity which it should? Are you making the most of the magnificent opportunities that lie before you? You are picked men and women, you are the hope of America's tomorrow; will America be justified in her hope? I am confident what the reply will be if you ask yourselves this question straight, and ask it often.

### THE GIFTS OF EDUCATION

What should your University training give you? First, it should make you masters of some one field of knowledge, or at least thoroughly familiar with the margins of that field; for, as you will recall, even a Newton at the end of a career of crowded achievement confessed that he was but as a child picking up pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of science. It should enable you not merely to master facts now but to know where to look for facts; to know how to put your hand quickly and effectively on the information you will require in after years. It should give you a trained mind, a quick intelligence, a passion for accuracy, a scorn for sloppy thinking and loose discussion.

It should bring to you a tolerance for other men's sincere opinions, a sympathy with ways of life and thought different from your own, without in any way weakening your own convictions and your own endeavor to make those convictions triumph. It should bring you self-knowledge and self-mastery: the knowledge of one's powers that comes from the endeavor to take a full share in every side of student life; the mastery of one's weaknesses, that the relentless criticism of your companions and the inspiration of the great men whose lives you study make possible.

It should bring you friendships that will light up all your future years—friendships lasting because rooted in common interests and common enthusiasms. It should bring you a full measure of loyalty and public spirit; the loyalty you come to cherish toward your faculty, toward your University, is the best preparation for the loyalty to the nation, the interest in the life and needs of your community that are the fundamentals of good citizenship.

### THE HERITAGE OF PITTSBURGH STUDENTS

But should not the students of the University of Pittsburgh carry away from these walls a special heritage? In the republic of letters all universities are equal citizens, but no two are alike, no two have the same part to play. The University of Pittsburgh, like the Universities of Bologna and Paris, Oxford and Cambridge, was founded on a river, at the meeting place of rivers, where in early days and modern days traders met and communities grew and mind rubbed against mind. But your rivers are not the rivers of Cam or Isis, nor the waters of Amana and Pharpar. Your University is not a copy of any old-world institution. It has its distinctive tasks, its distinctive limitations, its distinctive opportunities, its distinctive achievements, and you have your distinctive heritage.

What does it mean to be a student in the University of this great city? What does this city stand for in the making of America?

May I ask you to recall just three phases of the growth of this community? First, the far-off days, now more than a century and a half gone by, when French and English fought for the mastery of the Ohio Valley; the days when Fort Duquesne was transformed into Fort Pitt. The story of that struggle is colorful; it has its ample share of high romance, of the dramatic interest of fierce struggles for high stakes and rapid fluctuations of fortune. The names of Washington and Dinwiddie, of Braddock and Forbes, of Jumonville and Villiers, of Beaujeu and Contrecoeur, will not soon be forgotten.

But it is not so much the romantic interest of that struggle to which I invite your attention, as it is to the

qualities which gave the English eventual mastery. They were certainly not braver nor more daring than their foes; they were not more skilled in arms; they were not elaborately prepared and highly organized. The secret of their success, the secret of the rapid growth of the English colonies as compared with the slow growth of the French colonies, lay in their greater freedom, and in the initiative and persistence which were rooted in freedom. In the French colonies the government was all in all; governor and seignior and bishop prescribed every detail of the habitant's life. In the English colonies, though autocratic governors and narrow clerics were not wanting, the prevailing temper was the love of freedom. Self-reliance and individual initiative were the dominant notes. They were powerful forces. The English colonists were likely to lose the first battle, but they were sure to win the last one.

Again, in the struggle against the wilderness, we find the same indispensable qualities. Nowhere was the pioneer spirit more fully displayed than in this Ohio Valley. Nowhere will you find the rugged qualities of the frontier more fully developed. Perhaps the Ulster man, who played so great a part in the opening up of this commonwealth, was responsible for the special degree of tenacity that marked the early settlers, but their qualities in the main were the qualities that marked all our pioneer ancestors.

It was not a spectacular struggle, that contest of theirs with wind and weather, with toil and privation, that conquest year by year of a few more acres of tilled land, but it was truly heroic. "Felling forests and planting men, scattering cities through a continent, and covering wild seas, rivers and lakes, with navigated ships, this," said D'Arcy McGee in the fifties, "this is

the great transforming act of human enterprise." The spirit of the frontier has been the spirit of America. The qualities of resourcefulness, of versatility, of initiative, of self-reliance, of neighborly helpfulness, the readiness to press constantly farther on into the unknown, have been worked into the fiber and the spirit of the American. I hope they are ours enduringly. I hope that we are not going to lose the stamp they have set upon us.

Then came the third stage in the development of this region, the beginning of the industrial activity which was to make here a greater Ruhr, a greater Birmingham. It was a new field, but it called for the same indomitable pioneer qualities. The story of the steel industry is a story of daring and resourcefulness, of audacious and wide-visioned planning, of courage to blaze new trails, of quick adaptation to changing conditions, of readiness to scrap old ways. It is a story of triumph over technical difficulties and market problems, of constant striving for efficiency and economy. Naturally, it is not a story of unqualified success; not all the men nor all the methods used were free from criticism. There may have been no little harshness, no little crudity in some of the phases of this development, some ignoring of the human values; but in growth, in transformation, there is always crudity—there is always clashing where there is abounding life. In the primary task of organizing and developing the great resources of this region, of making its wealth available for the people of America as speedily and as economically as might be, the men of the past generation did their part. It is for the new generation to carry on that achievement and to undertake in addition the task of solving the human problems of industry, of working out an enduring settlement of the

relations of labor and capital, on a basis of confidence and coöperation.

A student whose lot is cast in Pittsburgh should be mindful, then, of the men who in these valleys worked out the America that is today, mindful of the men who determined that this should become an English-speaking land, mindful of the pioneers who transformed the forest into field and homestead, mindful of the pioneers who wrought to create here the most efficient of world industries. There is still much to do. *There is always a new frontier in industry.* Perhaps the tasks that lie before us, at home and abroad, are even greater than those that faced our fathers. But if you young men and women can preserve the spirit of the frontier and add to it the knowledge of the schools, I see no reason to have any fear for the America of the future. This is your special heritage, the spirit of the pioneer; may it carry you, and carry America, to heights undreamed.

#### THE TRADITION OF THE UNIVERSITY

But while you would be recreant indeed if you did not bend the full force of your minds upon the practical problems of industry, you surely will do well never to forget those pioneers of the human spirit who, in laying the foundation of learning, originated the tradition of the training of the mind and the discipline of the soul. Studies may change, but the spirit in which they should be pursued has not altered with the revolution of centuries. And the essence of the tradition of the university seems to me to be the treatment of accurate knowledge with generosity of judgment. Knowledge ever increases, and methods in its acquisition and practical employment must vary from epoch to epoch;

but the constant element in the tradition I suggest is generosity of outlook and that urbane and humane temper with which the finer spirits of any century assimilate and employ the material knowledge at their disposal. With your permission I desire today to allow my mind to dwell upon this constant element.

When the medieval university arose, certain conditions prevailed which merit our attention today. Christian Europe was then small in area and scant in population; men's command over nature was feeble indeed; there was much roughness in manners and primitive savagery was strong in the blood; but within the boundaries of Christendom there prevailed a unity which succeeding ages have lost. They had a universal language and a universal culture, and the scholar was a member of a republic of letters—a very aristocratic republic, it is true—which knew no bounds but those of the European system. Even in the sphere of statesmanship, while there was much of violence, there prevailed also a European outlook. Chaucer found it perfectly natural to represent his knight as a man who had soldiered in the general cause of western civilization in regions far indeed from the country of his immediate allegiance. Chaucer himself made his ideal gentleman a soldier who did his principal fighting under German, Spanish and French princes, but in the cause of a common civilization.

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONALISM

Later centuries developed the principle of nationalism. The United States, a geographical extension of the European culture which developed in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, took their form in the period when that new current of human life was running deep

and strong. Unquestionably, nationalism is a precious possession, tending to intensify individual powers and to increase men's ability to act together. Unquestionably, also, the absorption of the Western World in nationalism has meant a retrocession from the liberality of the medieval ideal of a Christendom in which the several nations were component parts of a single self-conscious civilization.

Let me dwell for a moment upon the benefits of nationalism. If you ask me for a peculiarly apt example of its worth, I refer you to the case of Scotland. During the formative centuries of Great Britain, England made efforts to include Scotland, as she did Wales, in her national system, and Scotland offered a passionately energetic resistance, which was successful; she came into the British system late in time, and she came upon terms of association and not of absorption. For this aloofness, she paid a heavy price. It was more than a price of poverty. She did not share in the earlier centuries in the development of the English constitution, that mother of freedom; her social order remained disordered and violent; and she had no part in the seventeenth century wave of colonization which founded the communities which expanded into these United States. But when she gained access to the wider world which association with England granted, she brought a national character, vivid and deepened.

Forged upon the anvil of adversity, the Scot was tough, resistant, indomitable, and withal of a fiery energy and initiative. In the wide areas occupied or influenced by the English-speaking nations, the Scot at once has preserved his national pride and loyalty and has done full service in coöperation with other national elements. In our own history, nationalism has been an

indispensable element. One of the great contributions to human civilization to the credit of America is hospitality to the immigrant. A condition of that hospitality must be the presentation to the newcomer of the spirit of American unity which it has been our aim for a century and a half to build up, to strengthen and to infuse with idealism.

#### THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL LIBERALITY

Having said that, let me revert to the earlier medieval virtue of liberality in international relations. Nationality has worked in us and our forefathers for three or four centuries now, and, like everything else, it has the defects of its qualities. Like everything else, it has a definite work to do, and at some time that work will be done. Let me link with that thought the constant element in the university tradition, which I suppose can best be summed up in that word, rather too little used in these days, *generosity*. It is a quality that is peculiarly associated with youth, and to you, the generous youth of the American Nation, nurtured in a tradition of generous studies, future leaders of a great and powerful democracy, I make the suggestion that you consider with anxious care how much is good in the medieval example.

Of this I can assure you: in the material affairs, in the sphere of manufacturing and commerce, the world is closely interrelated.

Those Americans who would trade must consider other countries. Those Americans who would produce must do so in accordance with conditions in regions far removed, across wide and sundering oceans. In the Middle Ages, when production was tiny and commerce was slight, when countries by comparison with those of

today were self-contained in material concerns, there was an international liberality in things of the mind.

If America in the coming years is to maintain the rate of her material progress, her manufacturers and her merchants must go beyond her boundaries. Raw materials must be sought abroad, and so must markets. That will be a task of study and organization for which we must call in the aid of men educated in institutions like this. Foreign languages must be more widely known; the geography of distant countries must be studied with anxious care; the characteristics of other nations must be learned and considered. Our national manners must be in some sort modified. The development of this country has reached a point where its citizens, be they willing or unwilling, must enter into private business relations with citizens of other countries.

#### THE DUTIES OF STRENGTH

What I have just said to you is the voice of business. It has to do with material things, and foreigners who do not like us Americans are fond of charging us with slavery to materialism. I do not think that religious toleration is a material thing, and we Americans have led in conferring it upon the world. I do not think that consideration for women and reverence for childhood are evidences of materialism, and we Americans have not lagged in promoting those developments of humanity. I repudiate the charge as leveled against Americans of the past, and I turn to you, Americans of the future, and ask you whether it is not your part to add another idealistic chapter to the annals of your country. I tell you that American commerce is becoming internationalized, that American private citizens who make goods and sell goods are finding their occupations becoming

internationalized. I ask you whether American public affairs should not acquire new interest in and knowledge of international affairs.

I know that the moment I breathe this word the great name of Washington will be invoked and that I shall hear of the warning against foreign entanglements that is regarded as his political testament. I yield to no man in my regard for the Father of our Country. But I venture to suggest to you that he played his part in circumstances singularly unlike those of the present day.

His great service, after the attainment of independence, was the achievement of national unity; the United States of his day were imperfectly united, and it took two-thirds of a century to weld them into an indestructible whole. When he was president, the American people numbered some three or four million and occupied a fraction of their territorial area of today; the mouth of the Mississippi was under foreign control; the West Indies, then of immense importance, were strongly held by divers European powers. Across the Atlantic, Great Britain alone had thrice our population, and the French nation was seven or eight times as numerous as we. Spain, Austria and Prussia, the other powers of the day, greatly exceeded us in numerical strength. These countries had industrial resources far beyond those of our farming and seafaring people; they had powerfully organized governments and ample military resources. It would have been a perilous adventure indeed for so small a country, spread over so great an area, administered by so new and untried a federal authority, to go interfering in the affairs of neighbors of such strength. It emphatically was our business to grow big; and in doing that we had in those days the one great strategic advantage of remoteness,

for the Atlantic Ocean protected us and it took long weeks to cross it. Even this catalog does not exhaust the list of advantages in aloofness, but it will suffice for the moment. What is the case now? Has Great Britain thrice the number of our population? We have nearly twice as many white citizens as the whole British Empire. We have between twice and thrice the population of France, and not far from twice the population of Germany. Of our economic strength I need not speak. As our weaknesses have disappeared, that former great strategic advantage has lessened; we no longer are remote, and the Atlantic, measured in time, is perhaps one-eighth, perhaps one-sixth, as wide as it was when Washington died. Is the strongest nation in the world to observe the rules of prudence justly laid down when it was one of the weakest?

I put it to you that you are the coming citizens of what today and tomorrow must be regarded as the strongest nation of the world. It is a nation which, in its economic workings, must concern itself increasingly with the outside world. Has strength no duties? Must not our public policies concern themselves with other countries? I put it to you that if the universities of the United States are to preserve the generosity of temper which I have described as the essence, the soul of their inheritance from the past, they must train their youth to a just conception of foreign affairs.

#### HELPING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD

I know that a great disappointment has disheartened many, and has strengthened the tendency to abandon interest in anything outside of this continent. But I suggest that the disappointment is temporary. Despite

superficial developments, and the imperfect recovery from hatreds of whose intensity we happily can form little idea, the World War has had one important moral consequence. The European powers, after the necessary deductions have been made, have come to the conclusion that their former self-regarding nationalistic policy inevitably resulted in wars; and they have a horror of war and are groping for new policies which will keep peace and promote amicable coöperation. The groping at times may resemble fumbling, the vision may be dim, old habits may be strong, but the desire is there. A new temper is in Europe.

Here there surely is a challenge to American idealism. It is a crisis as well; for if the new desire is balked, if the old forces of jealousy and hatred prove too strong, the vision may fade. A new generation will grow up without the knowledge of the awfulness of war, and prone to yield to its fascination if in the years immediately before us we do not block that downward road. The time has come for America, who has shown her love of peace, to concern herself in the affairs of the outside world, and to conceive and put into execution a foreign policy designed to rehabilitate a shattered world and to influence it to follow the paths of coöperation.

Such an enterprise is no light thing. We are a democratic nation, and every step in public policy must be taken under the inspection of the mass of electors. Beyond question, the American public is not yet qualified to pass expert judgment upon so difficult and so intricate a subject. The world of Europe is widely different from ours, and still more alien are the non-European countries with which we must have dealings. Careful study of complex questions by trained minds is needed, and so also is a public temper suitable to nego-

tiations with peoples differing in outlook and often sensitive and suspicious. I do not suggest that every elector must have a wide knowledge of world history and an intimate acquaintance with world conditions. But I do suggest very forcibly that we need some thousands of university graduates who are equipped to follow foreign affairs with intelligence and sympathy; and that the ordinary intelligent public will do well to follow seriously the foreign news in the more serious newspapers.

I am addressing university people, to whom public problems present themselves in a somewhat specialized form. To some extent you must be leaders. To a call to idealistic action the American people are unlikely to turn a deaf ear. Should you not issue that call? To some extent you are experts and explorers; is it not your duty to study the question, to arrive at what I may term a body of doctrine upon American foreign relations, and to impart to your students, if not in every case a profound knowledge, at all events a point of view and a habit of thought? And is there not room for a fresh consideration of specific studies, such as an effort to promote greater familiarity with the languages of the world overseas?

The details are your affair. My part is to make the broad general suggestion that the time has come for the western giant to look beyond his boundaries, to use his mighty strength to good purpose in helping with the affairs of the world. What American foreign policy as a whole must be, is a subject for serious debate; no man knows yet what it should be or what it will be. It must be framed under the eye of the people, by a just combination of intimate knowledge and broad currents of public opinion. The politicians must keep in touch

with the popular will and be guided by it; in saying that, I utter no reproach, for it is the condition of democracy that the will of the people must prevail. None the less, politicians should study foreign affairs so as not to misinterpret nor to thwart the desires of the American people; and when once interest is shown by their constituents, they will bend their minds to the new problems. But the shaping of public opinion should largely be the work of students like you. It is a mighty responsibility that lies upon you.

A crisis has come in the affairs of the world. Simultaneously, two great developments have come. Europe has sickened of war and of selfish foreign policy, and America, hesitant and reluctant though many of her citizens may be, is about to abandon her aloofness. Is American policy to be wise, to be just, to be generous? In no small part that is for you to say.

#### THE DUTY OF COMMERCE

What in these circumstances is the duty of commerce? The true commerce of the world is imperial in its scope, for it must embrace every interest and every land that furnishes merchantable commodities. As long as it pursues a beneficent policy, so long will it endure and prosper; and it is the duty of the devotees of science who have joined themselves to the interests of commerce to see that such high-minded and enlightened beneficence is made the true aim and ultimate achievement of the whole of our commercial activities. Profit should be treated as a by-product, and it will be found, so treated, to be like many of our by-products—more valuable eventually than the staple. For nature is lavish with those who fall in with her principles; and we should learn generosity, if anything, from the bounty

to which we owe all the riches of the mineral world, all the kindly fruits of the earth, all the means by which we support life in our various climates and are able with fuel, food and raiment to dominate the whole round world. We have in commerce, then, an approach both to man and to nature which gives us the fullest opportunities and opens up the widest avenues for our abilities. At this point we must feel that it is by our individual success that the success of the whole will be accomplished. If the world is to be unselfish, each of us must learn to be unselfish. If commerce is to serve the world, each of us must learn to serve humanity. To get the best out of ourselves, we must be under the control of the mind that alone can govern us. The desires and passions are wilful and uncertain forces and would lead us whither we know not if they were given the rein. But brought under restraint, like the great natural forces of steam or water-power or electricity or chemical action, we may do with ourselves what our engineers and contractors do with the earth.

Facing life, then, with the courage of these realities, and guided, as Lincoln phrases it, by "the better angels of our nature", we can put forth all our energies with glad hearts, loyal to a purpose which embraces the world, and look forward to a happy ending of a long day's work.

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